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ABSTRACT

The medieval times witnessed progress toward the growth of larger and more complex organizations and the application of increasingly sophisticated management techniques. Feudalism contributed the concept of decentralization. The concepts evolved by the Catholic Church can scarcely be improved on and are very much pertinent to the management of modern organizations. The concepts developed by the military and industry of the period are widely used today, although in a more refined and elaborate form. The concept of corporation as a separate entity has been a remarkable and extremely useful contribution of the late Roman law. Although no deliberate attempts toward theory-building are discernible during the medieval times, the writings of the period do offer an insight into the practice of management. Of special significance are the works of Machiavelli. Toward the end of the period, the emergence of Cameralism signifies an awakening to the need of training in management. (Author/IRT)

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EVOLUTION OF MANAGEMENT THOUGHT IN THE MEDIEVAL TIMES

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EVOLUTION OF MANAGEMENT THOUGHT IN THE MEDIEVAL TIMES

The intervening period from the fall of the Roman Empire to the beginning of the Renaissance is usually referred to as the medieval times. With the decline of the Roman Empire, political disorder became rampant and personal security scarce in Western Europe. People sought protection of powerful persons and in return paid the price of subservience. The empire was gradually replaced by numerous sovereign states continually at war with one another in which the vast majority of the people were rendered serfs. These were the feudal states of the Middle Ages in Western Europe. Feudalism as an institution prevailed during the period from about 600 A. D. to about 1500 A. D. It not only provided a new political order but also regulated the economic and social life of the people.

The Feudal System

The feudal system employed the scalar principle of organization from bottom up, at least in the beginning. The truncated Roman government, no longer capable of maintaining effective control, conferred a great deal of authority on big landowners including taxing and police powers over the tenants within their domains. The smaller landowners voluntarily surrendered the ownership of their lands to a powerful lord in return for a promise of protection during their lifetime. They, however, continued to occupy them as tenants. This process steadily progressed up from below.

The feudal structure was a pyramid, with the king at its apex, the serfs at the bottom, and the vassals, sub-vassals, and other subordinates in between. The great vassals of the king held fiefs on the condition that, in addition to other obligations, they would render military and financial assistance in times of need. A similar relationship existed between these vassals and their sub-vassals, and so on. This process of subinfeudation resulted in successive levels of hierarchy in the feudal system.

The feudal structure was a scalar chain with a graduated distribution of delegated authority. The delegated authority, however, was not revocable. It was a transfer, not conferment, of authority. Therefore, the greater vassals felt strong in their own right and did not depend on the king. In fact, it was the king who depended on them, and in many instances they overthrew his suzerainty. The people at the bottom of the feudal pyramid, however, did depend on their immediate overlord for protection and security.

In principle, all land belonged to the king in the feudal system, and everyone else was a tenant. But in practice it was seldom the case since the king had very limited authority that he could exercise. Thus feudalism offers the first example of decentralization in which the vassal had acquired the right and authority to govern his own territory without interference from the king. The feudal system evolved in response to the political and social exigencies of the period and, perhaps, met the needs of the times as best as it could, but it was far

from being an effective and efficient form of government. A serious weakness of the feudal system was its decentralization based on transfer of authority. Delegation of authority effected through transfer, instead of conferment, results in decentralization with a centrifugal tendency and contributes to the disintegration of the organization. The delegation of authority and decentralization are the inevitable corollaries of the growth of an organization. But in order to reap the advantages of decentralization and avoid its disadvantages, the nature of the delegation of authority is of crucial importance. Authority must be conferred, not transferred, that is, the superordinate should be able to recall the authority he delegates.[1]

The Catholic Church

In terms of continuity, the most effective formal organization in the history of the Western world has been the Roman Catholic Church. It is one of the oldest institutions to have employed the basic principles of management. The Catholic doctrine is the supreme coordinating authority which resides in God and which is exercised by the pope on earth.

In the early stage of its development, the Catholic Church faced acute problem of organization. Numerous sects grew which started moving independently in diverse directions. In the second century A. D., the church leaders sought to unify the church by defining precisely its objectives, doctrine, activities, and conditions of membership. They developed scriptual canons, an organization, and a source of central

authority. This ultimately led to the establishment of a centralized doctrine and authority in the church at Rome. The fact that the Catholic Church has endured for almost two thousand years without any serious erosion of its authority is a tribute to the organizing genius and creative ability of the early church leaders.

The management of the church is conducted through two institutions- the Sacred College and the Curia. The Sacred College is composed of the cardinals who are, after the pope, the highest officials of the church. Collectively, the Sacred College acts as the pope's council. The cardinals, in their individual capacity, assist the pope in the governance of the church. Thus they perform both the line and staff functions, that is, functions of actions and counsel, respectively.[2]

The Curia constitutes the central administration of the Catholic Church, incorporating the numerous departments of the church government. The work of all these departments is coordinated through the central line authority. The Catholic Church is one of the most highly centralized organizations in the world as the chain of command runs from the pope through the cardinals, the bishops, the priests, to the laity. This is reinforced by the immutability of the church doctrine based on the dogmas as enunciated by the pope who is considered to be the representative of God on earth.

The departmental functions of the Curia are similar to those of any secular government. The distinctive feature of the church organization lies in the development in the third century of a seven-fold

ministry consisting of priests or presbyters, deacons, subdeacons, acolytes, exorcists, readers, and door-keepers, all performing different functions. Thus the distinction among the seven orders is characterized by functional differentiation, with the priesthood being the highest office in the Catholic Church. On the other hand, the distinction among the pope, the cardinals, and the bishops is hierarchical, not functional, because they essentially are all priests.[3]

Another example of functional differentiation (that is, functionalism) in the church organization is provided by the distinction made between the secular and the regular clergy. The secular clergy primarily renders priestly services to its congregation within the dioceses. The regular clergy, on the other hand, engages in the propagation of the Catholic faith, through missions, in non-Christian and non-Catholic countries and prepares the way for the organization of the secular clergy. Also, it supplements the work of the secular clergy within the dioceses by providing specialized services such as charity, preaching, and education.[4]

The Catholic Church employs the staff principle extensively. The staff principle had its beginning in the Benedictine monasteries in the early part of the sixth century. Later, it spread to other institutions of the church. The church requires that a superior consult his subordinates prior to making a decision. This in no way curtails the line authority of the superior. He is free to accept or reject their counsel. This simply forbids him from making a decision until he has

consulted them who have the right to be heard. This may be termed as the principle of compulsory staff service. The application of this principle is readily evident when institutions like the consistory of cardinals and the great ecumenical councils counsel the pope.[5]

The Jesuit order of the Catholic Church offers an example where the advisers for its head are chosen by the general congregation. The head is required to consult them and they can not be dismissed by him. The independence of the advisers is analogous to that of the cardinals in relation to the pope. This may be termed as the principle of staff independence. It has also been extended to other parts of the church organization.[6]

The salient contributions of the Catholic Church to management, then, are: coordination through doctrine, centralization through line authority, unity of command, hierarchical organization, functionalism, compulsory staff service, and staff independence.[7]

The Military

The institution of military is as old as the mankind since there is no period in history that has been free from the activities of warfare. As the military grew in size, it intuitively and unwittingly employed the management concepts of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, controlling, doctrine, discipline, morale, motivation, authority, responsibility, delegation, hierarchy, functionalism, line and staff, and others. Often the effectiveness of the application of these concepts to the management of the military has

been crucial to its success. Because of the immense risk involved in its operations, the military has, over the years, refined these concepts to a high degree of sophistication.

The concept of staff function in the military organization, although as old as the war itself, was most developed in the medieval times. From an almost unnoticeable service function in the past, it acquired a concrete and definitive form during this period. It had its beginning in the scouting function, that is, finding safe and suitable sites for the army to camp while on march. This gradually led to the establishment of the office of the quartermaster general in the seventeenth century.[8] In due course, the responsibilities of the quartermaster general expanded from the scouting function to gathering all information of value to the military and he became a knowledgeable military counselor. In the more recent times, with the expansion and diversification of the staff services, the duties of the quartermaster general have largely come to be limited to the provision of ration and clothing. Thus, the quartermaster general would be considered as the first staff officer in the military organization and a precursor of the staff service in the modern times.

During the medieval period, the term general staff came into use, and by the last quarter of the eighteenth century, a general staff service with the advisory function was established in the major armies of Europe. It was, however, the Prussian army that developed the general staff organization in the modern sense, that is, a completely

organized, coordinated, informative, advisory, and supervisory staff service under one head, the chief of staff.[9]

The military has made the distinction between the general staff and the technical staff. The general staff includes those officers whose services are of a general nature and are needed by the whole organization on a continuous basis. The technical staff, in contrast, is composed of the various specialists and is subordinate to the general staff. The general staff service in the military is the most pervasive and the most antique of any such service ever developed by any other organization.

The relationship between the line and staff officers in the military is quite intimate and constant. All planning is done through the coordinated and combined efforts of the two, although the line officers have the right of final decision. The staff officers facilitate the execution of the plans and assist the line officers in the performance of their duties, but they in themselves do not possess the authority of command. Both are indispensable for the success of the organization.

Being a highly competetive organization, the military has continuously evolved and refined the management concepts in an attempt to become an efficient fighting machine. The military offers an example of the most extensive use of the staff service and the most meticulous distinction between the line and staff functions, uncomparable to any other organization.

The Industry

Functional differentiation has characterized human activity since the beginning of mankind. Even in the most primitive times, man, by and large chased the game, caught fish, and gathered fruits and nuts, while the woman prepared the meals, tended to the young ones, and played a generally supportive role. The functional differentiation continued progressively through the successive stages in human history. For example, with the advent of the handicraft stage, in the cloth-making craft, spinning was invariably done by the woman and weaving by the man.

In the process of the economic evolution, the first stage was the economy of self-sufficiency in which the family produced all it needed. This was followed by the stage of specialization in handicrafts when the family produced more of the same thing and bartered the surplus to satisfy its other needs. The third stage was marked by the appearance of the merchant who initially simply bought and sold the goods, but later started employing craftsmen for wages, became the entrepreneur, and dominated the cottage industry. This undoubtedly necessitated the application of the management skills of a higher degree on his part. In the fourth stage, the merchants organized themselves into guilds in order to monopolize the trade and to control the craft production. This was followed by the organization of the craftsmen themselves which resulted in the formation of the craft guilds of the medieval Europe. Through the formation of the craft guilds, the craftsmen regained control of their trade. Eventually, the merchant

guilds disappeared and the merchant simply became the vendor of the craft products, with no control over their production.[10]

The organization of the craft guilds was always a hierarchy of three levels: the master craftsmen, journeymen, and apprentices. The relationship between the first two was scalar and between the latter two functional. The craft guilds began to disintegrate as early as the fifteenth century and almost vanished prior to the advent of the factory system. The reasons that led to their dissolution were mainly their monopolistic characteristic and their exclusiveness. They controlled production and debarred admission to outside craftsmen. These frustrated craftsmen continued their trade wherever they could and gradually sapped the vitality of the craft guilds. In time, for similar reasons, dissatisfaction grew within the guilds themselves and the membership gradually dwindled. The disgruntled journeymen formed their associations to mount agitation for fair wages and improved working conditions. These associations were the progenitors of the modern labor unions. These factors coupled with the growth of industry outside the guilds hastened their extinction. The salient contribution of the guilds to management is their application of the principles of hierarchy and functionalism.[11]

The growth of handicraft production outside the guilds led to the revival of craftsmen working individually at home. With this trend, the merchant appeared again as a middleman who bought and sold the products and often financed the craftsmen. In many instances, the

merchant employed a group of craftsmen at one place, taking them out of their homes. With the invention of power-driven machines in the eighteenth century England, such places provided the nuclei for the development of modern factories.

An outstanding example of the use of management techniques in the medieval times is furnished by the handicraft industry of the Arsenal of Venice. In the fifteenth century, Venice grew to be a prosperous trade center with international operations. In order to protect its sea lanes, it started its own government-managed shipyard, the Arsenal. The Arsenal employed large-scale production techniques to build warships for the navy and probably became the largest industrial plant in the world at that time.[12]

The shipyard was managed by three lords with the assistance of the commissioners. The commissioners were the liaison officers between the Venetian senate and the Arsenal. The lords and the commissioners were mostly occupied with the high level management tasks, whereas the foremen and technical advisers supervised the actual shipbuilding operations. The senate kept a close watch on the Arsenal because of its significance for the national welfare.

The primary functions of the Arsenal were: (1) The manufacture of galleys, arms, and equipment; (2) the storage of equipment and material; and (3) the assembly and fitting of the galleys and armament. The equipment and material were numbered and stocked in designated spaces. This saved time and labor in locating items when needed

as well as in the inventory of the stock. The warehouses were located on both sides of a canal in such a manner that they formed a sort of assembly line. A galley was towed along the canal and was fitted with arms and equipment in a short time.

There was a close supervision of the work-force. In the production of galleys, equipment, and armament, various trades were employed. The workers in each trade were supervised by foremen skilled in that trade. A merit-rating plan was in force, and the performance of workers was evaluated periodically to determine their progress. Depending upon the nature of the work, both piece-rate and daily wages methods were used as modes of payment. There were fairly well established procedures to handle the discipline problems.

The managers of the Arsenal instituted the policy of standardization, that is, making the parts of galleys, equipment, and armament identical and interchangeable. The purpose of this policy was to accelerate production, speed up repairs, improve quality, and promote efficiency.

The Arsenal was a large organization employing thousands of persons and handling vast sums of money. Its management, therefore, required strict accounting of men, material, and money. For this purpose, two journals and one ledger were kept. Periodically, these books were checked to determine the accuracy of the accounts. There was also an annual audit of the books. The practice of the double-entry book-keeping system facilitated the process of control. Accurate

records of raw materials, finished products, equipment, and armament were kept. Constant efforts were made to improve procedures to reduce the cost of production and increase efficiency.[13]

Writings on Management

The Dark Ages encompassed a period characterized by political instability, social turmoil, and physical violence. The insecure conditions in which people lived were not propitious for sustained intellectual activity. The vast majority of the people were ignorant and illiterate, and the academic pursuits were confined to the very few. Monasteries were the repositories of almost all the learning of the period, and the subject of management apparently failed to interest the members of the religious order. Consequently, the medieval period in Western Europe is virtually devoid of writings on management.

About 900 A. D., Alfarabi, an Arabic scholar, wrote a book in which he recommends that all officials of the state must be arranged in a hierarchy under one supreme head. The head of the state must possess noble qualities befitting his position. If no single person is found possessing all the requisite qualities, in that event a team of persons collectively possessing all those qualities must govern the state.[14]

About 1100 A. D., Ghazali, another Arabic scholar, in his counsel to the kings advises them to cultivate the qualities of justice, perceptivity, patience, and modesty, and to shun envy, arrogance, malice,

and narrow-mindedness.[15]

Nizam Al-Mulk, an adviser to the sultans of the Saljuq dynasty in Persia in the late eleventh century, wrote The Book of Government which contains advice to the rulers. He recommends the spirit of compromise and moderation in everything they do. Further, the rulers must seek advice from knowledgeable people before making decisions.[16]

From about fourteenth century on, the evidence with respect to management thought and practice steadily increased. Luca Pacioli's treatise published in 1494 contains a detailed explanation of the double-entry book-keeping system. His system was not improved upon until the twentieth century. His suggestions concerning the internal controls are still relevant to the management of modern organizations.[17]

In the fifteenth century, Venice was a flourishing trade center with numerous business houses. The accounts of the merchants of Venice reveal as to how they managed their businesses. Often the businesses were conducted as long-term partnerships in which one or more persons pooled their resources to raise the necessary capital. Joint ventures were also frequently undertaken which were, by and large, one-time projects. Partners had limited liability and they shared expenses and profits in proportion to their investment. The employment of commission agents overseas was a common practice. An elaborate system of documentation and record-keeping had been developed. The use of double-entry book-keeping and cost-accounting was firmly established. Andrea Barbarigo, Soranzo Brothers, Francisco Di Marco, and Medici

were among the prominent merchants of Italy of the period.[18]

Sir Thomas More (1478-1538) describes in his Utopia the woes of the English society of his time and portrays an ideal state. He blames the ruling nobles for the mismanagement of England. He expresses his abhorrence for the exploitation of farm tenants by the rich. He advocates the principle of specialization of labor to increase efficiency and to maximize the utilization of manpower. According to him, every person must learn a craft in order to become a productive member of the society. He recommends communal dining halls to effectuate economy. He would like only elected officials to serve in the government. Although Utopia is not a treatise on management, More has, nonetheless, contributed to it through serendipity.[19]

The Prince and The Discourses written by Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) contain management principles of great significance. Some of them are as follows:

1. Mass consent: The government must be based on mass consent. Even though a ruler may usurp power by force, he must somehow win the acceptance of his people.

2. Cohesiveness: The ruler must strive for cohesiveness in the organization of the state. In order to consolidate his rule, he must secure the allegiance of his friends through the dispensation of rewards. Further, the people should know what they can expect of their ruler and understand what is expected of them. Strict discipline must be maintained and no infraction of laws should go unpunished.

3. Leadership: Machiavelli distinguishes between two types of leaders: Those who are endowed with innate leadership qualities and those who acquire them through training and experience. A ruler by his example should be a source of inspiration to his people. He should be a good judge of people and events and should be able to use both to his advantage. He should be able to distinguish between loyal supporters and self-seeking flatterers and should be able to use both to further his objectives. He should institute a system of reward and punishment that would encourage people to work for the prosperity of the state and would deter the disruptive element from perpetrating crimes against the society and the state.

4. Will to survive: According to Machiavelli, the survival of the state is of supreme importance, and to this end all means are justified. The ruler may become unscrupulous, adopt cruel measures, disregard all canons of righteousness, and use stratagems of deception and treachery without any qualms of conscience.[20]

Machiavelli emphasizes that the ruler must choose the best possible advisers, ask of them right questions, and encourage them to speak freely. On their part, the advisers should be reserved in giving advice and refrain from expressing too much zeal. In order to overcome resistance to change, the new measures should be introduced in such a way that the semblance of the old form is retained as much as possible.[21]

Machiavelli prefers boldness to cautiousness and timidity in the ruler. Through boldness alone can a ruler use an opportunity to his

advantage. Further, for the success of a project, principal authority should reside in one person only. To have more than one chief administrator of a project creates inconceivable confusion.[22]

The Concept of Organization

Prior to the Roman times, no distinction was made between state, government, and community. The state was considered to be pervasive and inclusive of everything within its boundary. It was not until the formulation of the late Roman laws that a corporation came to be recognized as possessing a legal identity of its own, separate and distinct from that of its members, capable of owning property, transacting business, and outliving its founders, even to immortality. In medieval Europe, the concept of corporation came to be extended to universities, cities, towns, and, in fact, to any organization. With the advent of the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution, the concept of corporation was firmly established and widely accepted, and the corporate form was greatly refined. This development necessitated increased application of management.[23]

Training in Management

Usually, the ancient works are replete with the recommendations for the training of the prince in the management of the state, but they contain hardly any reference to the training of the officials. It is not until about 400 B. C. that one observes in the educational activities of the Confucians an effort designed to produce scholars, officials, and statesmen to manage the functions of the Chinese

government. The Confucians controlled the Chinese civil service examination system and used it to enhance their civil and social status. By contrast, in the medieval Europe, such an advancement was possible only through an affiliation with the church which was the repository of all learning.[24]

About the middle of the sixteenth century, there emerged in Germany a group known as the Cameralists who might be considered as counterparts of the Confucians. They were scholars who counseled rulers in the governance of the state. They served as public officials and professors at the same time. They produced literature on management and trained officials for the government. The universities became the training centers, and Cameralism was installed as a major field of study with the provision for specialization in several areas of management. The Cameralists believed that the management of the state differed from that of other types of organizations only in degree, not in kind. Therefore, they concentrated on the improvement oi management of state agencies almost exclusively. Cameralism as a movement came to an end toward the close of the eighteenth century. In the meantime, it laid a solid foundation for the development of a tightly organized, carefully selected, and meticulously trained Prussian civil and military service.[25]

About the same time, a movement known as Mercantilism started in Great Britain. Both Cameralism and Mercantilism advocated governmental control of the economy and had a similar philosophical approach in

general. However, unlike the Cameralists, the Mercantilists did not believe in formal training of public servants. In their judgment, apprenticeship was the best way to learn about the management of the government. This attitude has characterized the development of the British civil service.[26]

Conclusion

The medieval times represent a period of transition from antiquity to modernity in Western Europe. Feudalism, a unique institution of the period, contributed to management the concept of decentralization along with its weaknesses. The concepts evolved by the Catholic Church can scarcely be improved upon and are very much pertinent to the management of modern organizations. The concepts developed by the military and industry of the period are widely used today, although in a more refined and elaborate manner. The concept of corporation as a separate entity has been a truly remarkable and extremely useful contribution of the late Roman law, with ramifications for management. Although no deliberate attempts toward theory-building are discernible during the medieval times, the writings of the period do offer an insight into the practice of management. Of special significance are the works of Machiavelli whose pragmatism and realism are of inestimable value to the practitioner. He may very well be considered as a European counterpart of the ancient Indian scholar, Kautilya. Toward the end of the period, the emergence of Cameralism signifies an awakening to the need of training in management in

Western Europe, which had been recognized in China as early as 400 B. C. The medieval times witnessed the progress toward the growth of larger and more complex organizations and the application of increasingly sophisticated management techniques. In terms of theory-building advances, however, the period has little to offer.

FOOTNOTES

[1]James D. Mooney, The Principles of Organization (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1947), pp. 73-80.

[2]Ibid., pp. 105-108.

[3]Ibid., p. 110.

[4]Ibid., pp. 111-115.

[5]Ibid., p. 120.

[6]Ibid., p. 121.

[7]Ibid., p. 24.

[8]Ibid., pp. 142-143.

[9]Ibid., pp. 144-145.

[10]Ibid., pp. 157-158.

[11]Ibid., pp. 159-161.

[12]Claude S. George, Jr., The History of Management Thought, second edition (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), pp. 35-41.

[13]Frederic C. Lane, Venetian Ships and Shipbuilders of the Renaissance (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1934), pp. 127-164.

[14]Robert Hammond, The Philosophy of Alfarabi (New York: The Hobson Book Press, 1947), p. 51.

[15]F. R. C. Bagley (trans.), Ghazali's Book of Counsel for Kings (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 83.

[16]Nizam Al-Mulk, The Book of Government, trans. Hubert Drake (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), pp. 95, 188-191, 251.

[17]R. E. Brown and K. S. Johnston, Pacioli on Accounting (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1963), pp. 26, 99-102.
R. Emmett Taylor, "Luca Pacioli," Studies in the History of Accounting, ed. A. C. Littleton and B. S. Yamey (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, 1956), pp. 175-184.

[18]Claude S. George, Jr., op. cit., pp. 33-35.

[19]Sir Thomas More, Utopia, ed. Edward Surtz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 21-27, 69.

[20]Antony Jay, Management and Machiavelli (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1967), pp. 36-41, 64, 181, 225.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Bertram M. Gross, The Managing of Organizations, Vol. 1 (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), pp. 115-117.

[24]Hu Shih, "Confucianism," Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences (1931), IV, pp. 198-200.

[25]Albion W. Small, The Cameralists (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1909), pp. 253, 303-307.

[26]Bertram M. Gross, op. cit., pp. 108-109.

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